through a group of man-

acle-laden detectives last Tuesday evening, I reached the back of Chase's stage and accosted Mr. Harry Houdini, the "Handcuff King," to whom I disclosed my identity and mentioned my opinion of his stunt.

"When can we get together for a wordfest?" I inquired.

"Right now, if you like," he replied with an energetic manner that aroused my admiration.

"Tomorrow morning will do," I hedged, "if you can make it early enough."

"I usually sleep until seven-thirty," he said, apologetically, "but if you want to see me earlier than that---"

on eleven." And we did.

only living creature that does not would have been badly damaged." insist upon bringing manacles to bind her husband's limbs. It struck

heard one of them declare most em- staked his head on keeping me in. phatically that you were 'on the Not that that article is of any valdead level.'"

were easy," he replied.

which they locked you up was ed the same attitude?" equally easy," I said, admiringly, "I tion.'

said, and there was a noticeable European cities. I was locked in tinge of Litterness in his voice.

"How was that?"

ICKING my way nervously lice at the precinct to which they took me agreed to this, but after the test was started, I heard him whisper to one of his men to bring him the locks for another cell.

> "Naturally I objected to any change and he became most offensive in his manner. He told me his orders were to lock me up and keep me there, and intimated that if I was afraid I could pass the thing up and take the consequences. I remonstrated with him and told him to remember that I was not a criminal. That I had come to him of my own accord and deserved the courtesy due an equal. But he could not see it, and continued his brutal threatening attitude.

"Then I lost my head and went ahead recklessly. I know now that "Heaven forbid," I interrupted. I was foolish to do so, for my repwith a shiver. "Let us compromise utation is well established in every large city in the world, and I did At the Regent next morning I not need the Washington test. Of found him with his wife, who is his course, I was endangering my repstage partner, and their diminutive utation in submitting to a change pet dog, who, as Mrs. Houdini ex- of locks, for if they had got me by plained plaintively, seems to be the any means whatever, my standing

"But you got out?"

"Yes, I got out in eighteen minme that I had a look-in on the dog's utes, to the great surprise of the rating, but I did not urge the point. lieutenant. He had evidently been "You impressed the detectives very prepared to bet anything that I much last night," I told Houdini, "I couldn't do it. Why he would have ue," added Houdini, sarcastically.

"The handcuffs they tried on me "I am sorry to hear Washington treated you unfairly," I said. "Have "Evidently the stationhouse in any other police departments show-

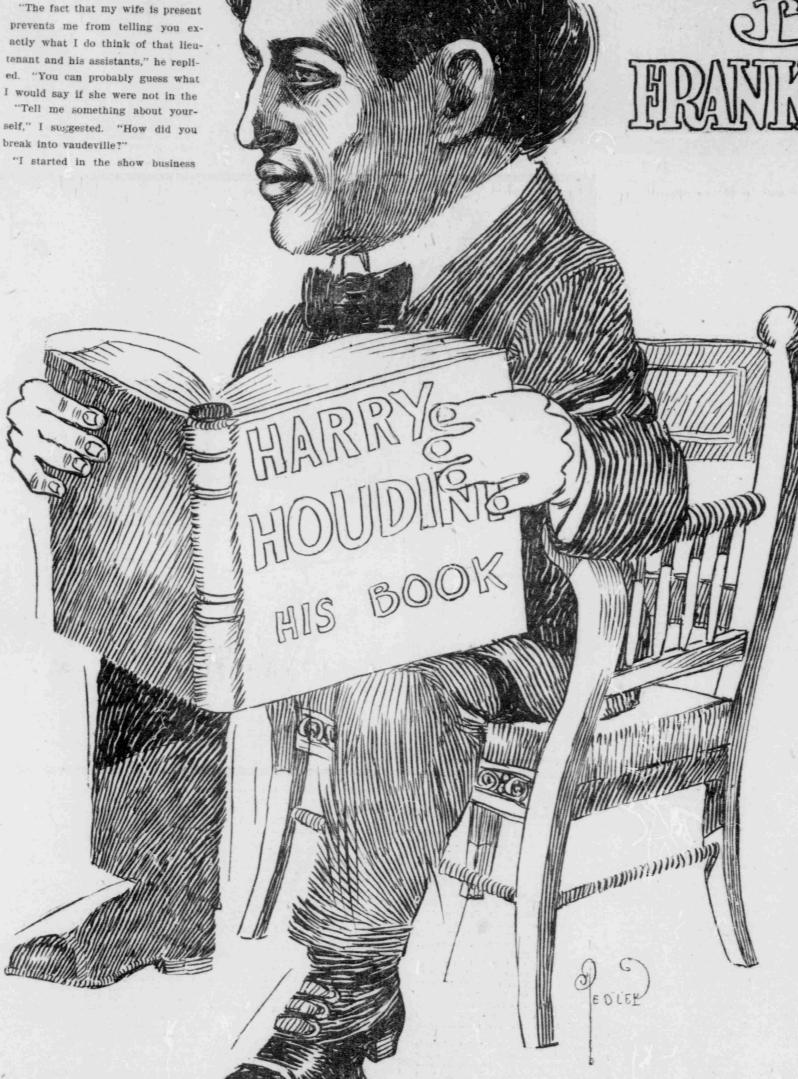
"Not one," he replied, with emshould like to know how you get phasis. "I have broken out of Scotout. It might be useful informa- land Yard, in London, and escaped from the police of Dresden, Berlin, "I took a long chance there," he Cologne, Paris, and dozens of other the Moscow Siberian transportation cell, and examined beforehand by the "They didn't give me a square hardened Russian secret police ofdeal," he replied. "I went to them ficials. But though they all made

mained for Washington to treat me like a common malefactor."

"I gather that you are not favorably impressed by the Capital police," I observed.

"The fact that my wife is present tenant and his assistants," he replied. "You can probably guess what

"Tell me something about yourself," I suggested. "How did you



Examined critically the imposing stack of police admissions process. I did so without difficulty, cally starving-living in garrets to defeat at the hands of Houdini.

and as I always do in the cities I the test as severe as possible, they visit, offered them the chance to all gave me an absolutely square lock me in and keep me there if deal, and accorded me the most courplacing me and examine the locks Brooklyn, Rochester, Buffalo, De- was escaping from ropes that had of the London vaudeville house, tough time if you should turn crim-

mother took me out and apprenticed me to a locksmith. That is where I got my first knowledge of the weakness of locks. I discovered a method of opening them which I kept to myself. One day the sheriff one occasion a sheriff in the audi- then agreed to sign a contract with of the town brought in a prisoner handcuffed and asked my employer to remove the manacles as the key had been broken. I was told to file them off and set to work. The sheriff and my employer went out That started me in the line I now out. After that I had nothing but to get a drink and left me at work. The steel was very tough and I made practically no progress at the filing. Then it occurred to me to get into vaudeville here, but I undoubtedly a remarkable collecopen the lock by means of my secret couldn't make it go. I was practition. The conservative London pabut in doing so, of course, I gave the while traveling around giving exsecret away to the prisoner. He is hibitions. I offered to give the ex- cal cartoons based on his handcuff the only person in the world baside hibition on the vaudeville circuit for abilities. The same is true of the my wife who knows how I open \$40 a week, but I was turned down. German papers. And Houdini does locks, and I have never heard from Now I get a thousand. I saw I had not seemed to be affected by the nothey could. But I made the condition the solution of the solution that country so I toriety he has achieved. He is quite tion I always insist on that I should to the United States I have broken locksmith business and ran away scraped up a little money and took modest and unaffected. see the cell in which they intended out of stationhouses in New York, with a circus. One of my tricks a chance at London. Manager Slater,

when I was a youngster, but my

"Why did you go abroad?"

to be used. The lieutenant of po- troit, and Baltimore, but it has re- been bound around my arms. On gave me several private trials and inal," I observed

ence told me that if he put his me if I could break out of Scotland handcuffs on me I couldn't get Yard. The detectives there had no away. I took a look at them and fears about my getting away and decided I could. He locked them on used easy locks. When I was ready and in twenty minutes I was free. I just shook the doors and walked big successes all over Europe.'

He produced his scrap book and "To go a reputation. I tried to showed me his clippings. They are pers and periodica's not only gave him unlimited space, but ran politi-

"You would give the police a

"There's no doubt about that," he said, with a smile. "However, there is no danger. I make all the money I want honestly."

"The secret of your power lies in the fact that you are probably the most expert locksmith in the world, does it not?" I inquired.

"Practically, yes. I can open the ordinary handcuff by simply rapping it on the floor. I understand the mechanism so thoroughly that I know just how to tap it to make it fly open. For such easy tricks 1 don't mind allowing the spectators to watch me. It is when I have something very difficult to perform that I retire into my 'Ghost House'

"Do you meet many people who 'see it ail""

"Oh, yes, in every audience. There is always some one to cry 'fake.' But there is no fake about it. I can open locks, that's all."

I rose to go with genuine regret. Houdini is an entertaining talker.

"Here is some literature you might like to take along," he said, producing a collection of pamphlets, covering his doings in foreign lands, as well as the story of his life from the time of his birth, April 6, 1873, in Appleton, Wis., to the present day. We shook hands cordially, and Houdini accompanied me down the hall to show me the proper stairway.

"I suppose if I get locked in any of these rooms you would get me out." I called back to him.

"Send for me any time you get



Found him with his wife, who is his stage partner.

locked up," he answered, with a

In the solitude of my den, I examined critically the imposing stack of police admissions to defeat at the hands of Houdini. After all, it does seem as if the sleuths are not as invincible as the authors of ten-cent literature would have us believe.

FRANK MORSE.

VENFALL. Come, heap the logs, and send the blaze up higher. And make good cheer about the roaring Nay, but the bluebird's here! Or, stay, I think I heard the laughing of the bobolink! Was that the ash upon a coal took Or is 't the blue bloom of a pulpy Within my chimney corner's happy A cloud of wizard sprites the seasons

And all the year a many-colored dream! Can I mistake, or was 't yester-eve I saw the fireflies dance the fairies weave?

Was it this morn that from his sphere of flame Love stooped, deific, uttering my name? Surely no music or of flute or bird Like the child's voice this afternoon I heard! Through what meridians of light you Oh, lovely life, and through what stress

My wondering soul to this serener air! -Harriet Prescott Spoofford in Century.